1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

The Rājas were Kannaḍigas and under their rule the importance of Kannaḍa culture increased in Coorg at the expense of Malayāḷam. They were also Lingāyaṭs, who are staunch vegetarians and teetotallers, and possess a powerful and highly organized church of their own. Fifty-seven Lingāyaṭ *maṭhas* or monasteries, some of them heavily endowed, existed in north Coorg during Richter's time.[1]

The religion of the Rājas left its mark on the general population, and especially on Coorgs. The latter constituted the aristocracy under the Rājas, and a number of them held important posts at the Rājas' courts. Members of the royal family occasionally married Coorgs. The close contact which Coorgs enjoyed with the Rājas certainly helped in the spread of the culture and religion of the latter.

Many Coorgs even today adorn their foreheads with three horizontal, finger-wide, stripes of *vibhūti* or sacred ashes, a mark used by devotees of Shiva in all parts of India. Coorg folksongs frequently refer to a man or woman praying to Shiva soon after getting up in the morning. Most of the important temples visited by Coorgs are Shaivite in character.

VII

The annexation of Coorg by the British in 1834 marks the beginning of the operation of vast political, economic, social, and ideological forces on the people of that tiny province. For instance, the British gave *jagirs* or assessment-free lands to those Coorgs who had helped them in the suppression of the Canara Rebellion of 1837, and later these were allowed to be treated as gifts to the individuals concerned and not to their joint families. Traditionally, the joint family was the unit which owned land, and individuals owned only a little cash and a few movables. But by 1870, less than forty years after the annexation of Coorg by the British, some individual Coorgs had acquired for themselves farms and coffee plantations. Richter applauds the change:

> . . . these individual enterprises seem to be the natural transition to an impending general social reform—the breaking up of the great houses, and the independent establishment of each married couple residing near their own paddy-fields, and eating the fruit of their own labour. The

[1] Op. cit., pp. 175-6.

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

ments, ritually bores the ears of boys and girls. Formerly, the ritual boring of a boy's ears was an important initiation rite, marking his transition from boyhood to adulthood.

The clothes washed by the washerman (Maḍivāḷa) are not only clean but ritually pure (*maḍi*), and ritually pure clothes should be worn on ritual occasions. The washerman's services are necessary on every ritual occasion. For instance, at a Coorg wedding he has the duty of supplying clean cloths for the bridal pair to walk on, and cloths to cover the ceiling above the bridal seat. He has similar duties at the festival of the village-deity. He also acts as the ritual purifier when a birth or death occurs in a Coorg house. But some Coorgs, especially those in Kiggaṭnāḍ, resort to the Brahmin for ritual purification.

Contact with a barber defiles a Coorg, and every Coorg has a purificatory bath after being shaved by a barber. Such a bath is necessary in order to restore the shaved person to normal ritual status. The barber's services are, however, indispensable at a wedding and a funeral, and shaving is an essential preliminary act for men on ritual occasions.

The Mēda occupies a very low position in the caste hierarchy. He makes artefacts like baskets, fish-traps, and receptacles of cane, *vōṭé* reed, and bamboo. He is indispensable at a Coorg festival, dance or hunt, where he beats his tom-tom. The Mēda is a byword for stupidity in Coorg folklore.

The strength of the bond prevailing between the Coorg master and his Poleya servant expressed itself in ritual. Formerly, one or two members of the Poleya servant-family observed ritual mourning for their dead master or mistress. On the day their mourning terminated they were given gifts of cloths and provisions by their masters. The Poleya servants (men) also performed a mourning dance (*anga kaḷi*) in front of the master's house before the corpse was removed to the burial-ground.

At a Coorg wedding, just as the bridal pair are about to leave the bride's house for the groom's, a Poleya servant of the bride's family comes forward, holding a torch in his left hand, while he spreads a cloth before them. The groom throws money, equivalent to a *paṇa* (about three annas), on the cloth. The Poleya then removes the cloth, thus enabling the bridal pair to proceed: contact with a cloth touched by a Poleya defiles a member of a high caste.

Sometimes ritual occasions stress the structural distance that

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

the white original: it is of wool, has short sleeves, and a V-shaped neck permitting the display of a collar and tie. The white gown is ritually superior to the black gown.

Usually the gown is secured at the waist by a tasselled red silk sash called *chēlé*, but when the subject is sitting for the shaving rite, a red cotton scarf is used instead of the silk sash.

The subject salutes the lamp in the south-western room, the south-western pillar, and the wall-lamp before sitting on the tripod stool placed on a mat. Near the mat is a dining-dish (*taḷi*) containing milk, and a harvest-basket containing some rice, a coconut, a bunch of plantains, and betel leaves and areca-nut.

Water may not be used for shaving on this occasion. Milk is used instead. The shavings are put into the dining-dish, and later the barber empties the dish at the foot of a milk-exuding tree.

A distinctive form of shaving prevails at marriage, and perhaps at subsequent *mangalas* (it does not, however, prevail at the ear-boring *mangala*). The front of the head is shaved in such a manner that it leaves two 'horns' above the temples, formed by the shaved patches. This mode of shaving is called '*kombanjavara*' which means 'horn shave'.

The harvest-basket containing rice, plantains, and the bell-metal dining-dish, and the scarf at the subject's waist, are given as gifts to the barber.

Two other men get themselves shaved after the subject. All over south India it is common at a wedding for two or four companions of the subject to 'accompany' him (or her) in certain rites. For instance, two men are given a bath along with the groom, and two girls are given a bath along with the bride.

In the south-western parts of Coorg the bride undergoes, before *mūrta*, a rite called '*kūrangodi muripa*', which is analogous to shaving. The bride's brother's wife removes from the bride's head a thin wisp of hair, and pares her nails. (The barber normally pares the nails after shaving a man.) These are put into a dining-dish containing milk. Later, the dining-dish is emptied at the foot of a milk-exuding tree.

Coorgs are generally more Westernized in their ways than others in Coorg, and there are more cropped heads among them than among others. But formerly they, like other Hindus, had their entire heads shaved but for a tuft of hair at the crown. Tufts started giving place to cropped heads towards the close of the last

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

302 177 century. The exclusive shaving of the face as distinct from the shaving of the face along with the head also came into vogue at the same time, and moustaches, which were only removed at the death of a very close relative, began to disappear entirely.

302 589 881 Marriage conferred on a man the right to have his head shaved periodically, and a bachelor was not entitled to it unless he had undergone the ear-boring *mangala*. The latter ritual conferred social adulthood on a male: in the folksong about the hero Kaiyandira Appayya it is seen that he successfully claims to be an adult on the strength of the fact that his friends, all boys tending cattle, performed this ritual for him in the jungle.

884 304 The ear-boring *mangala* has now entirely disappeared, and I learn that even fifty years ago it was only performed very rarely, and that, too, as a votive offering to a deity. But though the ritual [304] had disappeared the concepts associated with it continued to exist for some time afterwards. It was considered improper for an adult [764] to be without ear-rings, and such men were not admitted to the temple of Iggutappa in Nālknāḍ. If a Coorg died without his ears being bored, the corpse's ears were pierced before burial.

[302] The ear-boring *mangala* was the first of several *mangalas* for a male, and the head was shaved for the first time on this occasion. The performance of this *mangala* conferred certain privileges on the individual in question, one of which being that he could have his face shaved periodically by a barber.

783 302 At the various *mangalas* shaving is a preparatory ritual act. On these occasions it is followed by a bath and by the wearing of ritually pure robes. These preliminary rites make the subject pure, and while in this condition he performs certain rites, or others perform certain rites towards him.

765 302 The form of shaving prevalent normally is different from that prevalent at mourning. Normally the tuft at the crown and the moustache have to be left untouched at shaving, while at mourning it is obligatory, at any rate for the chief male mourners, to have their heads and faces shaved entirely. Other close relatives who are junior to the dead person are recommended to follow the example of the chief mourners, but it does not seem to be obligatory for them. The mourners get themselves shaved on the morning following the disposal of the corpse; and this shave marks the beginning of ritual mourning. The mourners may not have another shave while ritual mourning lasts. In the case of the eldest son and

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

widower, ritual mourning lasts sometimes six months, and during this entire period shaving is forbidden.

The restriction on shaving is only one of several restrictions imposed on the mourners, and in order to understand its meaning completely all the restrictions have to be taken into consideration. The mourners are forbidden to consume meat, honey, betel leaves and areca-nut, mushrooms, and liquor. They may not go to a temple, or wedding, or dance. They have to wear mourning dress, and they have to perform certain ritual. It is necessary to emphasize that these restrictions have to be observed. They show to the outside world that the mourner is 'concerned' in the death that has occurred.

There are degrees of 'concern': the close relatives have to show greater concern than distant kindred. The mourning period is longer for them, and they are marked off from the others in other ways too. The obligatory expression of concern in the culturally defined manner serves to maintain a certain kinship and social structure.

VII

The preparatory, purificatory ritual act which comes after shaving is a ritual bath. It is usual for three[1] married women to give this ritual bath to the subject. The *guḍḍa* or bathroom is a room outside the main building of the ancestral house, and the subject marches in state to it. The procession is headed by pipers and drummers followed by four Coorgs beating a tiny drum and singing the traditional 'road song'. At a wedding, after the groom returns in state from his bath, the best man[2] helps to dress him in ritual robes and ornaments.

A Coorg washes his hands, feet, and face before saluting the sacred wall-lamp every day, morning and evening; and on festival days he takes a bath and changes into clothes washed by the washerman. Both bath and change of clothes are preliminary to prayer.

It is usual to approximate physical impurity to ritual impurity.

[1] Odd numbers have ritual value in Coorg as elsewhere in south India. Number '3' is specially sacred. A person usually walks thrice round a sacred object like a tripod stool, temple, and funeral pyre.

[2] The best man (*bōjakāra*) is a married man, and the bride has a matron of honour (*bōjakarati*).

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

An unwashed state is an impure state, and taking a bath and changing into clean clothes alter the ritual status of the subject. While this is generally true we must, however, guard ourselves against completely identifying physical purity or cleanliness with ritual purity. It is not every bath that changes the ritual status of the subject.

A ritual bath alters the subject's ritual status. It adds to his ritual purity and makes him fit to pray, or to be possessed by a deity. But sometimes the emphasis is on the bath terminating a condition of ritual impurity. That is to say, instead of a bath adding purity to normal ritual status, it might only be putting an end to ritual impurity, which is a condition inferior to normal ritual status. For instance, a mother is ritually impure for fifty-nine days after the birth of her child. On the twelfth day, however, she attains partial purity after a bath and this enables her to enter the central hall and kitchen but not the south-western room. The child is ritually given a name on the twelfth day.

But complete purity is only attained on the sixtieth day when a ceremony called *aruvud* (literally, the sixtieth) is performed. The mother has a bath, changes her clothes, marks her forehead with three horizontal stripes of *vibhūti* or sacred ashes,[1] and then performs certain rites.

The important point to note here is that on both the twelfth and the sixtieth days a bath marks the termination of ritual impurity. It is also preliminary to the performance of certain rites.

That a ritual bath is different from an ordinary bath is made clear from the fact that the confined mother has an elaborate massage and bath every day, beginning with the day the baby is born. The massage and bath last several hours, but their object is therapeutic and not ritual. It is only on the twelfth and sixtieth days that a bath alters the ritual condition of the mother.[2] All baths clean the body, but only some purify as well as clean.

Greater ritual purity or merit ensues from a cold-water bath than from a hot-water bath. If the subject takes a cold-water bath while wearing his ritual robes, even greater ritual merit is acquired. Thus

[1] All over south India devotees of the god Shiva mark their foreheads every morning with three horizontal stripes of *vibhūti* or sacred ashes.

[2] Orthodox Brahmins frequently keep a cloth which they dip in water and squeeze dry and tie round their waists while performing certain rites. This cloth is frequently not very clean, whereas a snow-white *dhoti* brought by the washerman is ritually impure.

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

764 272 On the day after the cremation of a corpse, the dead man's son goes to the burial-ground, and on the spot where the dead man was buried he pours successively a vessel of water and a vessel of milk.

Milk is a very valued commodity, and the ritual giving of milk [431] indicates that solidarity is, or ought to be, prevalent between the giver and the recipient. It is also a symbol of pleasure, luxury, and [828] happiness, and consequently mourners abstain from it while they [765] offer it to the spirit of the departed person. The mourners also abstain from other valued objects like curd, honey, mushrooms, meat, and betel leaves and areca-nut, which are again offered to the dead person's spirit.

A kinsman who drank milk during the mourning-period would be guilty of impiety towards the dead person. In the neighbouring Kannaḍa country it is considered a very bitter abuse to tell a person, 'I will drink milk when you die.'

[302] The use of milk is extended from solidarity rites to other rites which have either no reference to solidarity at all or at best only a very indirect one. While ordinarily water is used in shaving a man, milk is used while shaving a bridegroom. The dish containing the milk and the shavings is later emptied at the foot of a milk-exuding [844] tree like the jack tree (*artocarpus integrifolia*). The placenta is similarly buried at the foot of a milk-exuding tree. One of the five pillars of a marriage *pandal* has to be a branch of a milk-exuding tree. After a corpse has been cremated the bones are consigned either to a river or buried at the foot of a milk-exuding tree. At [765] mourning, leaf-cups made from the leaves of the jack tree are used to offer food to the spirit of the departed person.

XII

585 431 Everyone who performs *mūrta* to the subject should give a money-gift, and the three married women are expected to give a gold coin (*pombaṇa*) each. At a wedding the mother of the bride (or groom), and the groom while performing *mūrta* to the bride, have to give a purse containing several coins, one of which should be a gold coin.

A money-gift has to be given not only at *mangala* but on other occasions as well: relatives who come to pay their last respects to the dead man perform a series of solidarity rites at the end of which they give a money-gift. Again, an infant has to be given a money-

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

of the world. Certain ritual and cultural forms are found widespread over peninsular India: the *tāḷi* or marriage badge tied by the groom to the bride is found everywhere except among Coorgs. A married woman wears a vermilion mark on her forehead, and only she is entitled to a necklace of tiny black beads and black bangles and to wear flowers in her hair. The cult of the village-deities too is broadly similar.[1]

Coorg Proper forms a 'Region' along with Malabar and South Canara. The three areas mentioned have many similar rites, beliefs, customs, and habits. But within this 'Region', Coorg Proper seems to have more in common with Malabar than with South Canara. The ritual forms which Coorg shares with Malabar and South Canara, and the deities worshipped by them, usually come under Regional Hinduism, while the ritual forms and deities shared in common with Kannaḍigas and Tamilians usually come under Peninsular Hinduism.

Local Hinduism has a more restricted 'spread' than Regional Hinduism. The people of a village or *nāḍ* share a great many ritual and cultural forms in common, though membership of a caste frequently cuts across these alinements in the case of the top and immigrant castes. Castes like the Baṇṇa, Paṇika, and Kaṇiya share certain ritual and cultural forms with not only their counterparts in Malabar but with all Malayāḷīs. Similarly with castes like the Poleyas and Mēdas who are immigrants from the Kannaḍa country. The length of the period of residence of an immigrant caste, and its position in the caste system, are factors which influence the extent to which it has preserved its traditional culture.

The River Kāvēri is a manifestation of Pārvati, the wife of Shiva, and the devout refer to it as Mother Kāvēri in certain contexts. Coorgs regard the Kāvēri as their patron goddess: the Kāvēri Myth associates the river specially with Coorgs. Coorg women pleat their saris at the back instead of in the front as in the rest of India, and this feature of their dress is attributed in the Myth to the force of the floods which pushed the pleats of the assembled Coorg women to the back. This happened when Pārvati first assumed the form of a river, and Coorgs, men and women, were waiting for their patron goddess to appear at Balmuri, a few miles from the source.

Regional Hinduism often contains some Sanskritic elements, in which case it directly stresses Regional ties and, indirectly, All-India

[1] [THROUGHOUT PENINSULAR INDIA -- ANALYST]

3:Iyer E-5 (no date) 1948 AW5 Coorg AW5

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Coorgs in National Costume

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A Village Takka (headman)

[facing p. 50]

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

137 card cases, paper cutters, fans, walking sticks, etc. which are
313 made chiefly in Nuggur and North Canara. Sandal-wood is
[322] also a Government monopoly and is collected at an expense
[655] of one eighth of the value of the wood, trees when from 16 to 40 years old according to the nature of the soil, where grown, are cut down; the best yield a billet of 5 inches square
[652] and 4 or 5 feet long. The wood fetches at the public auctions
[437] periodically held by Government at the cotics or wood stores,
[439] from 70 to 98 Rupees per candy of 550 avoirdupois, and is generally exported to Bombay. Natives distinguish 3 kinds according to colour: the "red sandal" (sriganda) which is the most highly scented, the "yellow sandal" (arasana ganda), and the "white sandal" (bili ganda) which possesses but a faint
314 aroma and is least prized. The chips are burnt as perfume,
[302] or reduced to powder which enters into the composition for marking the foreheads of natives. The roots, containing the
[303] greatest amount of the essential oil, are chiefly used for its production. It is heavier than water and yields an excellent
245 perfume. The sandal tree is propagated from seed and suckers, springing up from the roots.

137 A stately though not very valuable tree all over these
313 parts of the country is the *Wild Mango tree*, which towers with its lofty crown far above its humbler neighbours. But the giant of these jungles is the *Ajini* or *Wild Jack tree* (Artocarpus hirsuta), the timber of which is most useful for house and ship building. The rosy-tinted, smooth-barked *Ben-teak* or Nandi (Lagerstroemia parviflora) is reputed for its excellent timber.

137 A splendid jungle tree, when in flower in February and
314 March, is the *Red Cotton tree* or Bombax Malabaricum a very large specimen, stands in front of the Anandapur Mission Church. Its flowers are large and of a deep red colour, and the many seeded capsules contain a silky cotton, which is employed for stuffing pillows and mattresses. The staple is

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

*136 counter any one, who has been attracted by its peculiar noise. It is covered with a light brown woolly fur, whitish beneath, and lives chiefly on fruits, but is not frequently met with. When unobserved, it moves about the tree in a lively manner, but quickly escapes on being noticed.

There appear to be but two species of *Bats* (vespertilio), which are however very common in Coorg houses and temples and on the sago and plantain tree. Their flesh is considered very strengthening, and in cases, where Europeans would give cod liver oil to a delicate child, the Coorgs administer a roasted bat.

Of the *Carnivora* there are many representatives foremost the *Royal tiger* (felis tigris) which in former days was much more numerous all over Coorg; but even now it is not scarce, though he seldom attacks man. The large game of the jungles and the herds of cattle roaming about satisfy his appetite. During the reign of the Coorg Rajahs there were annual tiger hunts and Linga Rajah seldom killed fewer than there were days in the year. He was fond of these animals and kept some about his palace as pets. An amusing story about these royal pets is told by Captain Basil Hall, who visited this prince in 1813: "On returning" he writes, "to the great square in the centre of the building (now palace in Mercara) we found 3 chairs placed for us on Turkey carpet, spread on the ground in the open air. The Rajah took a seat and made me come beside him, after placing his son, a nice little boy, nine or ten years of age, on my right hand. This young fellow was gaily dressed with a large overspreading turban. A dark circle about the tenth of an inch broad, was painted round each of his eyes, which gave him a strange staring look; and on his cheeks, brow and chin were placed small black marks, or beautiful spots about twice as large as the head or dot of a note in music.

"The whole area of the court was now begirt with soldiers,

[Errata: This should read "beauty spots." See Corrigenda sheet, Cat. 116, p. 493 -- Analyst]

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

or 6000 armed men, has during the long period of peace and prosperity under the British Government considerably increased and may now be estimated at about 30,000 souls.

2. PERSONAL APPEARANCE, OCCUPATION AND GENERAL CHARACTER OF THE COORGS.

The Coorgs, or Kodagas as they are properly called, are the principal tribe of the country and from time immemorial the lords of the soil. For the last two centuries they are known as a compact body of mountaineers who resemble more a Scotch clan than a Hindu caste. In the Hindu scale they are Sudras and not pork-eating "Bastard Kchetrias," as some mocking Brahmins would have it; but it ought to be the pride of the Coorgs to discard the notion of caste altogether, which in fact does not apply to them, and to stand upon their own merits as "Kodagas", the remarkable mountain clan of Coorg. Reserving an enquiry into their origin for the historical part, I would only remark, that the Coorgs of the present day are as distinct from the Malayálam and Canarese people on the western coast, as they are from the Mysoreans in the north and east, though their peculiarities are to some extent allied to the habits of the one as well as to those of the other race, and even their language is but a mixture of the Dravidian tongues.

Look at a group of Coorgs of the better class by the side of some Mysoreans or people from the western coast. The difference is striking. The Coorgs are tall, muscular, broad chested, strong limbed and swift-footed. Men of 6 feet and above are not uncommon. Their features are regular, often distinguished by an aquiline nose and finely chiselled lips set off by a well trimmed mustache which in the "gala-mishe" terminates in a broad volute as worn by their Rajahs and men

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

142 distinguished for bravery. Apparently anticipating the pre-
302 sent military regulation, they shave their chin but sport
554 mighty whiskers! The colour of the Coorgs is lighter than
might be expected under this latitude. Their mode of life
186 and pride of race impart to their whole bearing an air of
manly independence and dignified self-assertion, well sustained
by their peculiar and picturesque costume.

291 The principal Coorg dress is a long coat (kupasa) of white
411 or blue cotton or dark coloured cloth and even velvet. It
reaches below the knees, is open in front, has, if not white,
short sleeves under which longer ones of a different colour
extend to the waist, and is held together by a red or blue sash
of cotton or silk which is several times wound round the waist[1]
and which holds the never failing Coorg knife, with ivory or
silver handle and chains of the same metal. A red kerchief
or the peculiarly fashioned turban, which is large and flat at
the top and covers a portion of the back of the neck, forms
the head-dress. The feet are bare or protected with light
301 sandals. A necklace of the berry of Rudrákshi (Elæocarpus
ganitrus), silver or gold bracelets on the wrists, and silver
and gold earrings with pearls or precious stones complete
their festive costume. Those who are in possession of the
Coorg-medal or the lunulate ornament called Kokaládi[2] do
not fail to suspend it round their neck, as may be seen on the
front-illustration. Their every day dress is of course of a
714 more simple nature. The Coorg warrior looks more imposing.
411 His dress is of the same cut, but of coarser material and
shorter. In addition to his handy waist-knife (Picha-katti),
he wears on his back in a strong clasp of brass the curved,
broad-bladed Coorg knife (Odu-katti) which is seen in the
147 hand of the figure in our illustration. In a hand-to-hand
527 fight it was a most formidable weapon and since the young
Coorgs have no longer Mussulman or Nair antagonists to
decapitate, they display at their feasts the strength of their

[1] [Errata: This should read "wrist" See Corrigenda, Cat. 116; P. 493 -- Analyst]
[2] [Errata: This should read "Kokadádi." -- Analyst]

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

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COORGS
grandfather, father and grandsons.

Photogr. by the Rev. G. Richter. Lith. by E. Kaufmann, Lahr.

[facing p. 128]

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

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A Coorgman armed.

Photogr by the Rev. G. Richter. Lith. by E. Kaufmann, Lahr.

[facing p. 136]